



## ***What is a Healthy Body Fat Percentage?***

Body fat is something that most people cringe at. The truth is, body fat is essential for many reasons; however, having too much body fat is not good. So what is healthy? In order to figure out **healthy body fat** measurements, we have to understand the two types of fat. Essential fat is the fat that everyone absolutely needs for survival. This fat helps regulate your body temperature and helps cushion your organs. A certain amount of storage fat is also needed for extra cushioning of organs.

The key to maintaining a healthy body fat percentage is not having too much storage fat, but enough essential fat. Essential fat should be around 3% for men and 12% for women. The rest of the percentage is storage fat. When looking at healthy body fat percentages, age, along with gender, provides a guideline because as you get older, your healthy body fat percentage increases.

### **Women**

Ages 20-40 : 21-33%

Ages 41-60 : 23-35%

Ages 61-79 : 24-36%

### **Men**

Ages 20-40 8-19%

Ages 41-60 11-22%

Ages 61-79 13-25%

Above are healthy body fat percentages at every age. There are several ways to get your body fat measured by a professional; there are also many different home body fat tests that you can do yourself. Many bathroom scales are now equipped with a body fat calculator. If you'd like to get actual measurements, there are three common tests that can be administered.

**Bioelectrical Impedance:** For this test, a low electric current is sent through

the body. Muscle contains a lot of water, and water is a good conductor for electricity, so the current will sail through muscle until it gets to fat, which is not a good conductor. The machine takes this information to calculate your body fat percentage.

**Skinfold Measurements:** This test is the only one that depends on a human. A professional will use a set of calipers to take measurements from certain sites on your body. Some tests require three sites, while others can require seven sites. Typical sites for measurements are usually thighs, stomach, and arms. The person administering the test will take a fold of skin and fat and measure with calipers. These measurements get plugged into a formula, which computes your body fat percentage.

**Hydrostatic Weighing:** Of the three tests, this one is the most accurate. A person sits in a tub of water on a scale and submerges their entire body. All of the air in the lungs is blown out to give the most accurate reading. This test takes your underwater weight, and from that number your body fat percentage is calculated.

It is important to keep in mind that there are two sides to the range of healthy body fat percentages. It's dangerous to be over the percentage, but it's also very dangerous to be below your range. Women require more body fat than men due to hormonal and childbearing requirements, so falling below your range can effect pregnancy. For people looking to **lose weight**, it is very important that the weight you lose does not put you under a healthy body fat percentage. Knowing your healthy body fat percentage range will give you a **weight loss** goal that will maximize your efforts!

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